

In general, the claims are directed to nonwoven webs and laminates made from the webs. The nonwoven web made according to the present invention includes a first area having a first basis weight and a second area having a second basis weight. The first areas and the second areas are located on the nonwoven web in a predetermined pattern. The first basis weight is at least 1.5 times greater than the second basis weight. As stated in the present specification, the differential basis weight nonwoven webs made according to the present invention can be made with improved fluid handling characteristics and strength characteristics.

As now amended, all of the claims require the nonwoven web to be compressed and thermally bonded together. For example, in one embodiment, the webs can be thermally point bonded together using thermal point bonding rollers 34 shown in Figure 1. Alternatively or in addition to using thermal point bonding rollers, the web can be calendered using a compression roller 32 as also shown in Figure 1. In still another embodiment, the web can be bonded together using a through-air bonded and compressed using calender rolls. In this embodiment, the web can be calendered prior to or after the through-air bonder. By compressing and thermally bonding the web together, a nonwoven web is formed having increased integrity.

In the Office Action, all of the claims were rejected solely in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,575,874 to Griesbach. As opposed to the presently pending claims, however, Griesbach teaches away from compressing and thermally bonding nonwoven webs together. Instead, Griesbach forms webs having a three dimensional configuration. In particular, the webs are formed on a fabric that has an array of discrete surface features such as apertures or projections, or both. As evidenced in the Abstract, Griesbach

stresses the importance of bonding the spunbond filaments together with an adhesive polymeric component so that the shape of the fabric is retained, i.e. without compressing the web.

For example, in column 4 starting at line 8, Griesbach states that the projections formed in the resulting webs "are not bonded with compression." (Emphasis added). In column 5, at line 12, Griesbach teaches that the web is bonded together with an adhesive "without the application of bonding pressure." Further, in column 5, at line 33, Griesbach states that the filaments in the web are bonded together with an adhesive to integrate the web "without the application of pressure."

As stated above, Griesbach teaches bonding the webs without pressure so that the webs retain their shape. In the process of the present invention, the webs are formed on a forming surface having high and low permeability areas. As opposed to Griesbach, however, the webs are compressed using thermal point bonding rollers and/or using calander rolls in order to increase the integrity of the web. The retention of any surface shape in the present invention is simply not critical as it is to the invention defined in Griesbach. As such, it is believed that the claims as now amended patentably define over Griesbach.

In summary, it is submitted that the present application is in complete condition for allowance and favorable action therefore is respectfully requested. Should any issues remain after consideration of the present amendment, however, Examiner Velazquez is invited and encouraged to telephone the undersigned at her convenience.

Please charge any additional fees required by this Amendment to Deposit Account No. 04-1403.

Respectfully submitted,


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APPENDIX "A"

1. (Amended) A nonwoven web made from fibers, said nonwoven web having a first end and a second and opposite end, said nonwoven web defining a first area having a first basis weight and a second area having a second basis weight being located on said nonwoven web according to a predetermined pattern, said first basis weight being at least about 1.5 times greater than said second basis weight, said second area being configured to pass liquids, said first area comprising from about 25% to about 75% of said nonwoven web, the web being compressed and thermally bonded together [said first area extending from said first end of said nonwoven web to said second end for providing strength across the web].

27. (Amended) A nonwoven web comprising extruded polymeric fibers, said nonwoven web having a first end and a second and opposite end, said nonwoven web defining first areas having a first basis weight and second areas having a second basis weight, said first and second areas being located on said web according to a predetermined pattern, said first basis weight being at least 1.5 times greater than said second basis weight, said first basis weight and said second basis weight ranging from about 0.2 ounces per square yard to about 9 ounces per square yard, the web being compressed and thermally bonded together. [said first areas extending from said first end of said nonwoven web to said second end for providing strength across the web].

35. (Amended) A laminate comprising:

a first layer comprising a substrate; and

a nonwoven web adhered to said substrate, said nonwoven web having a first end

and a second and opposite end, said nonwoven web comprising pulp fibers or polymeric fibers, said nonwoven web defining first areas having a first basis weight and second areas having a second basis weight located on said nonwoven web according to a predetermined pattern, said first basis weight being greater than said second basis weight, said first basis weight and said second basis weight ranging from about 0.2 ounces per square yard to about 9 ounces per square yard, the web being compressed and thermally bonded together. [said first areas extending from said first end of said nonwoven web to said second end for providing strength across the web].